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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
31 December 1952

RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH KOREA

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The basic differences between President Rhee and his opponents in the National Assembly remain unresolved. The recent political tension was brought to a head by the Assembly's disavowal of the President's two successive choices for the post of prime minister and its opposition to setting up machinery for electing an upper house and filling vacant assembly seats. These latter Rhee could undoubtedly pack with his followers, thus curtailing the powers of the assembly.

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Rhee's speech to the opening session of the Assembly was remarkably mild in content and he did not engage in the usual harangue against "anti-governmental elements" in the Assembly. Statements by South Korean officials on 24 December that no one in South Korea had been found involved in plots to overthrow the government and that the administration was not planning to draft a general mobilization law are other indications that Rhee has adopted a milder attitude toward the Assembly.

Prior to President-elect Eisenhower's visit to Korea the South Korean Government sponsored elaborate welcoming preparations and led the Korean public through the local press to expect such dramatic results as national unification. This action by Korean officialdom may account for press speculation that the Koreans were disappointed in the Eisenhower visit.

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Japanese Premier Yoshida is skeptical that General Clark's invitation to President Rhee to visit Japan on 5 January for several days will alter Rhee's bitterly anti-Japanese attitude. Foreign Minister Okazaki is hopeful that the visit may unlock the stalemated Japan-Korea negotiations and bring about normal diplomatic relations. The failure to arrange for such relations is needlessly hampering western unity in Korea.

Despite his failings, if Rhee were removed from leadership, temporary political chaos would be created in South Korea as a number of ambitious politicians, none of whom have the President's administrative training or hold on the public strive for leadership. There is no evidence that ranking military leaders possess political ambitions.

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